



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Julia Rafal-Baer and Michael Magee Jr.

**From:** Devon Puglia and Alex Bloom, SKDKnickerbocker

**Date:** January 14, 2021

**Re:** Rhode Island Communications Support

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### OVERVIEW

With the selection of Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo as the next Commerce Secretary, the state will be entering a transition as Lieutenant Governor Dan McKee is elevated to lead. But unlike many states across the country, Rhode Island's top two leaders do not pursue elective office as a ticket, and McKee has not been Raimondo's governing partner. The fact is that the next steps, and ensuring Lt. Governor McKee's success, are critical to the future of education policy in the state, to protecting the education progress that's already been made, and ensuring the expansion of high-quality charter schools in the state.

At a time when Rhode Island is battling a historic pandemic that has threatened public health and crippled the economy, McKee is stepping into the executive office with limited familiarity with the state's commissioners, programs, and processes developed by Raimondo's leadership team. There are also many questions swirling around education policy, the vaccine, and whether schools should be open. Put simply, Rhode Islanders as well as its children can't afford for McKee to start slow. A turbulent initial period could put the education ecosystem in jeopardy, and it's critical that he hit the ground running.

McKee's best defense will be a good offense – starting his tenure with a strong message and a visible presence across Rhode Island to ensure children, schools, residents, families, and businesses connect with him and have confidence in his leadership. Public charter schools, sound education policies, and children themselves who rely on new school options are depending on his success. The future of the education ecosystem and McKee are directly linked.

SKDK's political track record – working with Presidential candidates, Governors, elected officials, and chief executives to strengthen their profile – is second to none. We are also intimately familiar with the governing challenges presented by COVID-19, working with some of nation's largest and highest-profile hospitals to help them communicate during the pandemic. We also know education policy like no other public affairs firm in the nation.

At this moment, during this unique time of transition, the education ecosystem needs someone thinking about its future and about what its future holds in a McKee

administration. We are prepared to play that role, and support communications about the intersection and help provide the McKee transition the aircover it needs.

## **OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

To help support the education ecosystem with political guidance, develop communications to help provide aircover and public support for the incoming governor, and where necessary help the transition team communicate effectively with the public.

## **DELIVERABLES**

The following outlines how the project could be broken down in terms of deliverables.

### *Three Months*

Through a three-month project, we would focus on an intensive short-term sprint. That includes:

- Being a strategic communications adviser to the education ecosystem on politics, planning, messaging, and tactics as this transition period happens
- Supporting communications for the ecosystem around the vaccine, educators and schools
- Supporting the McKee transition team and advising on press releases, statements, advisories, and rapid response where appropriate, particularly around education communications
- Monitoring for changes in education policy
- Conducting comprehensive news and social media monitoring on the McKee Transition Team and education news

### *Six Months*

We would view a six-month project as a combination of our intensive short-term sprint in the initial three months with longer-term surrogate development in the latter period of the project. A six-month project would include all of the above, but would focus more on providing air-cover and working with educational partners to communicate in support of the administration. That would include:

- Drafting surrogate talking points, op-eds, and other communications in support of the McKee team and of the ecosystem

- Working with and helping activate educational partners, public charter school network leaders, and partners in the ecosystem to proactively communicate in support of the incoming governor
- Develop a six month communications plan for the ecosystem in support of the transition and the new governor

## **BUDGET**

To execute this scope, SKDK would charge a retainer based on the schedule of our engagement.

- For a three-month engagement, SKDK would charge \$25,000 per month for a project focused on intensive early support.
- For a six-month engagement, SKDK would charge \$20,000 per month combining our intensive early support with longer-term more surrogate support and communications planning, particularly around education policy.
- For a full-year engagement, SKDK would charge \$15,000 per month for transition support, initial brandbuilding, long-term outside communications support, and long-term political advice for the education ecosystem.

## **THANK YOU**

For any follow-up questions, please contact:

- Alex Bloom | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]
- Devon Puglia | [REDACTED] | [REDACTED]